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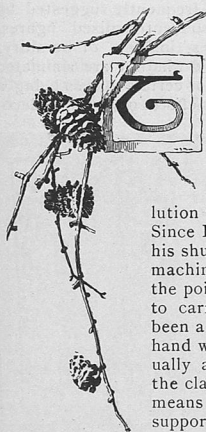
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# DECORATIVE TEXTILE FABRICS

## RUSSIAN EMBROIDERIES AND LACES.

BY MRS. S. A. BROCK PUTNAM.



HE work done with the sewing machine bears about the same relation to hand work with the needle that the work of the Jacquard loom does to the productions of the loom in use in the times of our colonial ancestors, as since the invention of M. Jacquard there has been a revolution in the manufacture of woven fabrics. Since Elias Howe discovered that to make his shuttle available in the lock-stitch sewing machine the eye of the needle should be in the point rather than in the head, in order to carry the thread conveniently, there has been a revolution in sewing, and with many hand work with the needle has become effectually a lost art. This is true especially of the class mainly dependent upon sewing as a means of personal support, and it may be the support of others, viz.: the class known as seamstresses and needlewomen. In many

cases, indeed, adepts in the management of the sewing machine confess to hardly knowing the use of their hands in manipulating with the needle, rarely basting for any purpose in their work, and relying solely upon the various attachments which go with machines for hemming, gathering, quilting, the working of buttonholes and other accomplishments possible with the needle and thread. But not everywhere that sewing is practiced has the sewing machine penetrated, and not with

woman who earns her daily bread in our midst betakes her to her sewing machine as a surer and easier means of livelihood, while the spoiled darling of fortune wiles away many an hour



MISS BOGATIRIOVA, RUSSIAN LACE MAKER.



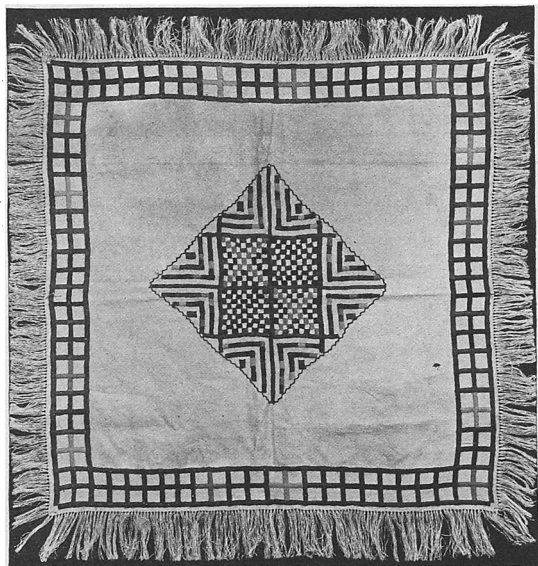
RUSSIAN EMBROIDERY. TOWEL EMBROIDERED WITH SILK AND GOLD THREAD. DESIGN XVIIITH CENTURY.

every woman, even in our own invention-proud country, has the little shining needle been supplanted by the handy, labor-saving machine. The needle has been called "the tool of the lady," and from prehistoric times to the present it has served for purposes both of domestic necessity and recreation. The

that would otherwise hang heavy on her hands in the gentler exercise, which causes to grow up under her fingers the things of beauty that are joys to the sight.

But it is not of the accomplishments of the daughters of ease and luxury that we have here to tell. Not yet, except in very rare instances, has the sewing machine found its way into the cottages of the Old World peasantry; yet from the cottages of the peasantry of several of the countries of Europe emanate some of the most remarkable accomplishments in needlecraft that have ever delighted the eyes of the connoisseur in feminine domestic handiwork. We have had occasion latterly to make specific reference to the needlework of Oriental countries in a review of the embroideries of the "Turkish Compassionate Fund," as now shown through the agency for its display and sale in New York, under the care of Madame Zaccaroff. In New York there has also been established an agency for the display and sale of the handiwork of the Russian peasantry, known as "Russian Cottage Industries." These include not only embroideries and laces, goats' wool shawls and veils, and certain woven fabrics, the work of women, but poker art work,

enamel work, silver and lacquer work, jewelry, cutlery, carved wood furniture, articles of birch bark, linde bark, horn and bone, and many curious appliances of household economy, done, or made by the men. The American branch of this agency, founded by Princess Schahovskoy, one of the ladies in



NAPKIN IN COLORED EMBROIDERY.

waiting to Her Majesty, the Dowager Empress of Russia, is under the clever management in New York of Madame A. L. Pogosky, a lady of St. Petersburg, of rare intelligence, energy and tact, and is located at No. 130 East Twenty-third street, near Lexington avenue. Madame Pogosky has with her several intelligent assistants, with a little lace-maker in 14-year-old Miss Bogatiriova, a native of Viatka, a very old lace-producing district bordering on Siberia.

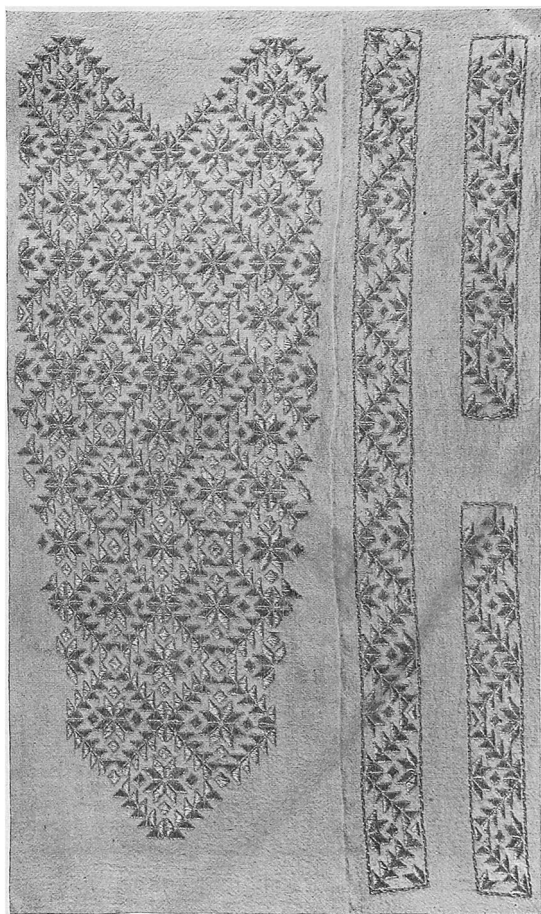
The earliest conclusive evidences, perhaps, that we had in America of the expertness of the Russian women in the use of the needle were in the charming exhibits of embroideries from Russia in the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876. There, besides the wonderful work in silver brought from shops in the Ural Mountains, and the dainty enamels from Moscow, were shown embroideries on linen which proved that the peasant women of Russia were not a whit behind their sisters of the Vosges Mountains of France in needlework; while we have before us now specimens of needlecraft which carry us back into times of very ancient history, and start us to speculating as to whence these humble women derived so delightful an art.

Some of the methods in the Russian embroideries indicate that they may have come down from Persia, as the stitches are identical with those seen in old specimens of Persian needlework, and in reproductions by the Armenian embroiderers, and we are carried back to Crim Tartary, and the imagination traces similar education in industrial recreations among all the people of interior Asia. But many of the most remarkable specimens of Russian needlecraft seen in the New York depository are in drawn work on linen; and although there are shown a few pieces similar to the *punto tirato*, or Mexican drawn work, it is generally very much more closely resembles the work done on the Philippine Islands and the Azores; and we at once begin to wonder how a common idea, in a gentle domestic handicraft, could have originated with these descendants of the ancient Scythians, the women of a group of far off islands in the China Sea, and those of the Portuguese dependencies off the western coast of Africa.

Inexhaustible patience, with marvelous skill in execution, characterizes all the Russian drawn work, while many of the

pieces exhibit a refinement of taste in design, hardly to be expected from operatives whose opportunities for cultivation in the gentler domestic arts are as circumscribed as are those of the simple peasant women who do this work.

Done much of it on the finest linen, the preparation of the cloth for the embroidery is both difficult and tedious. Any woman who has undertaken to draw a single thread in fine linen, to secure a perfectly straight edge, knows that it is neither an easy nor a pleasant exercise. For doing this work a foundation is first made by drawing and leaving about four threads of each, the warp and the woof, so that a chequered texture remains. The threads carefully cut away at a certain distance from the edge, or a blocked or scalloped design forming the edge, it is secured from ravelling by close buttonhole stitching wherever the raw edge appears. The entire surface is then gone over, wrapping the loose threads with one or two stitches, and taking a stitch or two at the junction of the threads, so that a grounding like fine network is left. The design is now incorporated. This is frequently suggested by the mesh of the grounding, but conventionalized figures, flowers, foliage, mythological fancies, insignia of heraldry, crowns, anchors, crosses, buildings and whatnot are simulated in the embroidery, a favorite design for certain pieces being a comical bird which appears in various efforts of Russian deco-

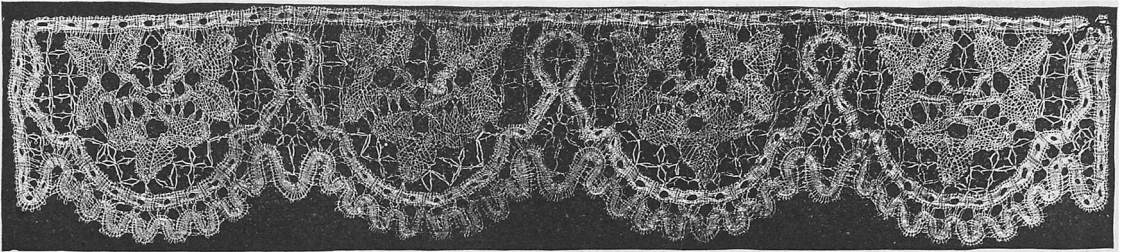


RUSSIAN SILVER LAID EMBROIDERY.

orative art, and is emblematic of a domestic idea. The designs are darned in, soft cotton thread being generally employed for the purpose, while outlining with colors and gold and silver threads is frequently seen on exceptionally handsome pieces of

work, and flowers, leaves and scrolls are often filled with a lace-like stitch which renders the work lighter and more delicate in effect than darning exclusively. In some cases a close design is formed on the linen, the edges of the design closely worked

the outline stitch, and laid stitches all having part in it. For the most part the embroiderer finds in the material upon which she works suggestion both for her stitches and her design, and the design is sometimes so covered that not a glimpse of the



BORDER IN RUSSIAN BOBBIN LACE.

in buttonhole stitch, and the threads of the field of the surface drawn and cut away; darned figures are then introduced, with figures perhaps in laid work garnishing the uncut scrolls, blossoms or leaves. From a piece of antique work, secured at much cost, Madame Pogosky shows a reproduction in a piece of trimming for an altar cloth, about twelve inches wide, as delicate as lace, and of surpassing richness, and yet for this wonderful piece of work the modest price is only thirty-five dollars.

There are shown of this work, in border designs, tea-table covers, center pieces for the table, tray covers, napkins, doilies, sheet shams and pillow shams; and pillow shams and other pieces in elegant all-over designs, the prices so modest as to bring tears to the eyes of any sympathetic woman who takes into account the amount of time, with the strain upon the eyesight, necessary for the accomplishment of any decorative needlework of artistic merit. Much of this embroidery is done in colors, red, blue and yellow being the colors almost invariably employed. Or instead of blue, black is introduced into it; and much of it is so closely wrought that the grounding is entirely covered by the embroidery.

In the undrawn colored embroideries of the Russians we are accustomed to think of the cross-stitch only. But a variety of stitches distinguishes this work—the gobelin or single stitch,

grounding material is visible. The designs are usually simple and severe, after the Greek idea, and run mostly into bands and borderings, furnishing ornamentation for table and bureau scarfs, towels and napery. This work serves also for trimming for the aprons, sleeves, etc., of the national costume of the peasant women of Russia. Madame Pogosky shows an exceptionally interesting piece of work of all-over design done in laid stitches, following the threads of the linen, in red, blue and white; and seemingly endless variety appears in the simple designs. The work is done on native linen—the flax broken, hatchelled, spun and woven by hand, and in natural gray and ecru tints, or bleached, as the case may be.

Another style of embroidery, which is after the idea of the Persian work, is done with gold and silver threads, on a soft and beautiful fleecy cotton muslin, from cotton grown in Russia, and spun and woven by hand. The work is in very simple designs of laid embroidery, following the threads of the grounding muslin, and forming set figures and stripes. It decorates doilies and other napery, and is used also on the waist, sleeves and skirt of ladies' gowns. Being colorless, except in the hues of the metal threads, the effect is refined and beautiful.

Lace has been defined as "transparent embroidery," but this definition does not comprehend the nature and character



RUSSIAN ALTAR LACE AND DRAWN WORK. WHOLE PIECE MEASURES 65 BY 15 INCHES.



of lace. Embroidery is best understood as scroll effect on a grounding material, done with a needle and thread; and while these effects may be wrought with needle and thread on net grounding to form a certain kind of lace, this material, properly speaking, has its own expression, without the aid or need of groundwork—the entire tissue, grounding and design growing out of the thread of which it is made. From Russia we have needle point, or a lace wrought with the needle, and pillow lace. The Russian needle point is a very rich and heavy lace, but more or less heavy, as the thread employed in making it is coarse or fine, and rich or more simple according to the design. It is done from a pattern pricked on stout paper or parchment, and is wholly the result of the stitches employed in the work. It may not be generally known that the buttonhole stitch is that upon which all the elaborate points are mainly dependent. But to what variety and charm of effect this simple stitch is made subservient we have only to study a piece of Russian point!

To a great extent it resembles the true Irish point in the manipulation of the thread of which it is wrought, but in some designs it is a much stouter lace than the Irish point, for the reason that it is relieved with a heavy cord which is closely worked over, and then we are reminded of methods employed in the *point d'Alençon*, in which white horse hair is sometimes introduced. The Russian point shown in the New York depository of the nation's industries is in native flax, in *écru* tints, and white; and, according to width and richness of design, it sells at from about \$2 to \$12 per yard. It is very elegant for dress trimming, and is admirably adapted to the trimming of fine napery and altar linen.

With the Russian pillow lace we are much better acquainted than the point. As are all guipures, it is wrought with threads weighted with bobbins, the number of threads employed being dependent on the character of the design, and this according with the width desired; and, according to width, the lace selling at from about ten cents to several dollars per yard. What is called the "cucumber design," a waved strip, of fewer or a greater number of curves, which runs through the length, is in great favor among the makers, and enters generally into the most elaborate pieces; while the edgings are very simple. The Russian pillow laces have sometimes colored and metallic threads introduced in them, and they are pleasingly adapted for the trimming of ladies' summer dress and lingerie, and for everything in bed linen and drapery.

With all this work of the Russian peasant women before us, we discover that there is still found employment for women's hands, but when we bring to recollection the small and humble dwellings of these needlewomen and reflect that much of this work must be done in the long, freezing winter evenings of the northern districts of the country, by the light of a single tallow candle, the wonder grows, and we are appalled with the expenditure of time and the sacrifice of sight required in it.

So the more thankful we become for our own greater national comforts, as we sit under electroliters, of 100 candle power, and seek recreation now and then in a piece of needlework at which our Russian peasant sisters might shyly indulge in an amiable laugh.

#### DECORATIVE NOTES.

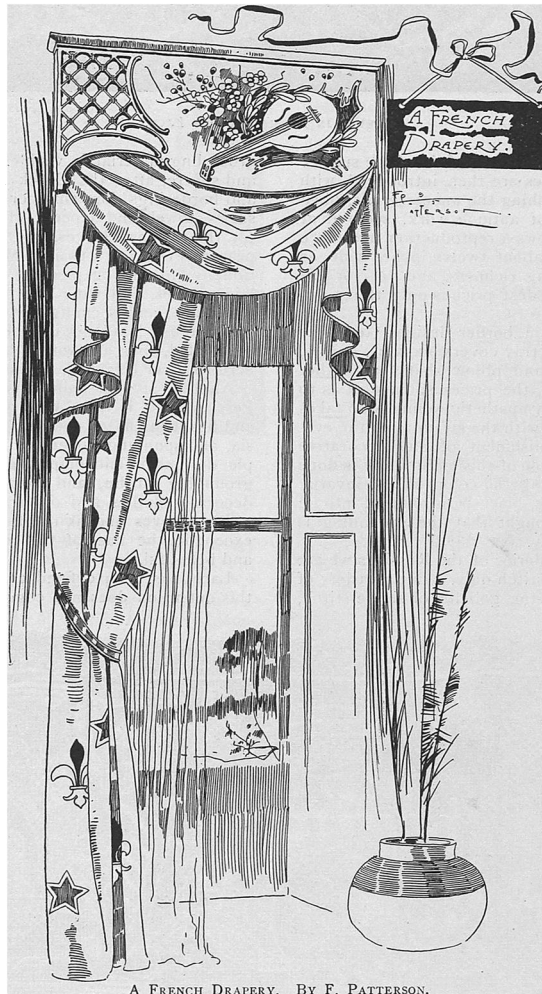
THE principal textiles of the Associated Artists, have been heretofore described as well as words can well make them. But what descriptions can ever quite translate hues, shades and tints, so that is visible to the mind's eye which the

outer organ has never seen? The best that can be done in the way of practical help to the house furnisher is to give the grade, price and approximate color of stuffs for hangings and upholstery, inclusive of wall coverings. Each householder can then compute, as far as appropriateness and expense goes, what would be suitable for cottage or mansion, in city or in country.

A SHOWY example of solid embroidery suitable for sofa cushions and borderings is the basket stitch and the several varieties growing from it. In these the threads or cords are laid longitudinally along the design, and the couching, in a silk of medium fineness, crosses them in basket fashion. That is, each successive stitch breaks the space between two passing over the thread previously crossed. The lengthwise threads are in shades of the same color, or in groups, one shading into another. In one variety the cross stitches make diagonal or diamond figures, or other geometrical patterns. Those varieties designated as "herring bone," "brier stitch," and feather stitch, are too well known to describe. They are employed as edgings of more intricate work, and are useful on almost every kind of material.

OF Gobelin and Aubusson tapestries, the most sumptuous expressions of the art, we have already fully described their great merits in these pages. The tapestry workers proper were called high warp workmen. Low warp tapestries were manufactured from the fourteenth century, although the term did not come into use until the end of the

sixteenth century. The distinctions of high warp and low warp still exist, but they are distinctions of process rather than of results. In the fifteenth century the pictorial interest of tapestry increased rapidly. The cartoons were executed by distinguished painters, and were in many cases virtual repetitions of their best pictures. One of the most famous of the Parisian tapestry workers of the time was Nicolas Bataille, who executed the celebrated Apocalypse, still preserved in the Cathedral of Angers, from designs by Jean de Bruges, painter-in-ordinary to Charles V. The weavers of Arras enjoyed the highest reputation for the superiority of their textures and dyes. The name of Arras is derived from the city of Arras.



A FRENCH DRAPERY. BY F. PATTERSON.